

rigs. Instead, each rig is only required to submit their spill response plans to the Minerals Management Service, an agency with many well-documented issues with administering rig safety standards. Oversight by the Coast Guard is necessary to ensure a fully coordinated response effort. If the Coast Guard has to clean up the spills, they should review the clean up plans ahead of time. The SAFE-GUARDS Act will make this a requirement for all current and future oil rigs, as well as establish the Commandant of the Coast Guard as the National Incident Commander to oversee the Federal Government's response to large oil spills in coastal waters.

Finally, the SAFEGUARDS Act will address some of the inadequacies in federal response efforts highlighted by the current spill. The framework of the National Contingency Plan, which is the Federal Government response plan for all oil spills, has not been updated since 1994. Oil spills in our coastal waters are unique disasters that deserve their own response plan. The SAFEGUARDS Act will require the response plan to be updated at least every five years. Further, this bill will require the EPA to begin monitoring water quality within forty-eight hours after an oil spill is discovered. It is important for the public to have accurate information about how our water, our wildlife and our beaches are being affected as quickly as possible.

The Federal Government's reaction to the Gulf disaster over the last few weeks has been insufficient, to say the least. BP's response has not been much better. The Clean Water Act requires the President and the Federal Government to lead the cleanup efforts, and we owe it to the American people and the entire Gulf coast to do better. The SAFE-GUARDS Act presents common sense solutions to help prevent a disaster of this magnitude from ever happening again, and improves the federal response in the event it ever does. Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support this measure to modernize and improve the governments prevention and response efforts to oil spills.

EXPRESSING THE CONDOLENCES
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTA-
TIVES ON THE DEATH OF THE
HONORABLE ROBERT C. BYRD, A
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF
WEST VIRGINIA

SPEECH OF

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 29, 2010

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it is with the utmost respect and admiration for the late Senator ROBERT CARLYLE BYRD that I recognize his passing. Senator BYRD was known as a man of the people. He dedicated his life's work to the

American citizens and his beloved constituency in the Mountain State of West Virginia.

Born November 20, 1917 in North Wilkesboro, North Carolina, the young BYRD moved with family to West Virginia where he grew up and would later meet his soon to be wife, Erma Ora James. Their marriage spanned more than six decades until her death in 2006. Initially, he was unable to afford college, but eventually attended Beckley College, Concord College, Morris Harvey College, and Marshall College, all in West Virginia. Senator BYRD's public service career began after he won a seat in the West Virginia House of Delegates in 1946. Six years later, he was elected to the United States House of Representatives. It was during this time he began night classes at American University's Washington College of Law in 1953. With a tenacious spirit and made up mind, he would earn his law degree some ten years later in 1963.

Along the course of his professional and academic career, BYRD was elected to the United States Senate and would serve 51 years making him the longest serving senator in history. His time in office was well-spent and fruitful where he would serve in a myriad of leadership roles. Most notably: President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate; Democratic Caucus Senate Majority leader; Senate Minority leader; and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

Senator BYRD, like many of us, lived a full life filled with high peaks and valleys low. I too, had some reservations about meeting this one-time member of the Klu Klux Klan who for 14 hours filibustered the Civil Rights Act of 1964. But, when our paths crossed, I soon learned of the great character of man he truly was. He believed whole-heartedly in the United States Constitution and a clear demonstration was the pocket version he always carried in his coat pocket. Another love he had was for taking afternoon walks on the West Front side of the Capitol. It was during that time of day where I knew I could find him whenever I needed to seek the voice of wisdom.

Mr. Speaker, I will miss those afternoon strolls with the Historian of the Senate. Senator BYRD loved the American people, loved his state and loved our great nation. Although he no longer is with us on the terrestrial, his legacy will live deeply within the halls of Congress and in the hearts of humanity.

EXPRESSING THE CONDOLENCES
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTA-
TIVES ON THE DEATH OF THE
HONORABLE ROBERT C. BYRD, A
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF
WEST VIRGINIA

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH D. HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 29, 2010

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize and honor the memory of United States Senator ROBERT C. BYRD of West Virginia.

Born in West Virginia, I have known Senator BYRD my whole life. Senator BYRD faithfully served West Virginia in Congress for more than 57 years. Throughout his career in the House and the Senate, he improved the lives and welfare of the people of West Virginia for whom he cared so much. He worked endlessly to fight for democratic principles, defend the Constitution, and ensure that the American Dream was in reach for all families.

Senator BYRD grew up in the southern coal-fields of West Virginia, first working as a gas station attendant briefly and then in a local food market. He started his political career in the West Virginia House of Delegates, serving from 1947 to 1950, followed by two years in the West Virginia Senate. After being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1952, he enrolled in night law school classes despite not having a bachelor's degree. In 1958, West Virginia elected him to the U.S. Senate where he became its longest-serving member.

Senator BYRD was an energetic defender of the U.S. Senate as an institution, persistently seeking to preserve its dignity and traditions. He literally wrote the book on the Senate—a four-volume history of the institution that is a treasure. To read his books and to read his speeches is to see Senator BYRD as a self-taught great orator and historian, someone who could readily quote from Shakespeare, Greek tragedies, and the King James Bible.

I always will remember him for his extraordinary devotion and service to the people of West Virginia. He paid exceptional attention to his constituents and their individual concerns. Staff members told me that at night they would receive calls at home from the Senator, quizzing them on people who had signed his guestbook that day and asking how he could help them. He would recognize people in a crowd and ask them if his constituent service to them years before took care of their problem.

My thoughts and condolences go out to his daughters, his family, and all of his friends and neighbors in West Virginia. Senator BYRD dedicated every day of his service in the U.S. Congress to strengthening the institution and the country that he loved so deeply.

He will be greatly missed. May he rest in peace with his beloved wife Erma.